The Black Cat

FEBRUARY
1908

The Magician's Revenge
Frank Crane

On the Other Shore
C. T. Ryder

Scovill's Sartorial Cyclone
Edgar Franklin

A Priestess of the Occult
Elizabeth Payne

A Far Cry
Maglyn Dupree

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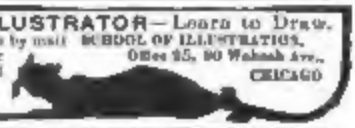

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The Magician's Revenge.*

BY FRANK CRANE.

THE fog which had followed the ship for three days lifted in the early morning, as the S. S. *Saxonia* sighted Boston light. Even as the sun rose brightly from a bank of cloud, so did the smiling face of Mr. J. Wilton Burroughs emerge from the door and beam above the rail toward the homeland, which was shaping itself gradually before him! It had been a rough passage, and sailing thus serenely into port, under a cloudless sky and upon peaceful waters, it seemed to him like waking from a troubled dream.

He was a prosperous appearing gentleman, returning from a year's stay in Europe. He was glad to get home. His wife had dragged him from Cairo to London, through all the length of the "American Midway," where he had been bored to death with ruins in Rome, interminable galleries in Florence and Munich, wholly unintelligible music in Berlin and Beyreuth, and wit and sparkle in Paris utterly beyond his grasp. He longed to be once more at his desk in the dingy office on Milk Street, to hear the click of the typewriter and to fondle his darling ledger. He was one of the familiar class of American men who spend their lives

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accumulating wealth they do not know how to enjoy, and who are bored unspeakably in trying to keep step with a family who have been inoculated with the germ of culture.

Mrs. Burroughs, who presently appeared at his side, "another sun risen on midday," was fair, fat and fifty-two. A working-girl in a shoe factory when she married a man who was equally poor, she had done her best to mount the social scale as he had risen in the business world. Her one ambition, never realized, was to penetrate into the esoteric ice-chests of the Boston Brahman caste.

Their home, an imposing house on Commonwealth Avenue, was fitted according to the best taste that could be bought in the local market. She had joined Mrs. Curtis Griswold's art class and labored dutifully to develop an intimate acquaintance with those great names, which to know aright is the hall-mark of the elect. Having now reached the stage where anything pretty was revolting, and where she could swoon with delight over the smutty remnant of a Duccio or a Giotto, she felt that she had indeed arrived. Culture, as she would have said, was hers.

It was full nine of the morning before they had fought their way through the customs and stood victorious before their mountain of trunks and boxes. Their luggage they consigned to the transfer man to be delivered at their home. Then they took a cab and gave the order:

"Commonwealth Avenue."

"We'll just unlock and go in and get the baggage delivered," said Mr. Burroughs, as he leaned back in the carriage. "Then we can go over to the Victoria Hotel while you're getting hold of some servants and putting the house in order."

"I do hope that Swede has kept the rooms aired, as I told him," replied his wife. "Swedes are so dumb, though, that you can never tell whether they understand you or not."

"Oh, Nels is pretty intelligent. He knows enough not to pester me with letters, anyhow. I told him not to write unless something happened."

"He may have written, for all you know. You can't rely on European mails."

So conversing they were driven through the crooked streets of

the down-town district and came at length to the broad boulevard upon which they lived.

Suddenly, as the bewildered cabman halted his horses, both of the worthy passengers uttered loud cries of amazement.

Their house was gone! The place where the residence had been was occupied by a plot of weedy, straggling grass.

"What under the sun!" ejaculated Mrs. Burroughs.

Her husband could hardly believe he was awake, and looked confusedly from one to another of the neighboring houses. They were all right. There was Greenbaum's, next door, and Mrs. Samuel's place on the other side. And there was the cement pavement he had hired Grant Brothers to lay, and the iron fence he had bought of Keeps and Coy — he remembered just what it cost — and, to make assurance riveted and clinched, there was the stone carriage step at the edge of the side-walk with "Burroughs" cut therein in bold letters.

"Maria," he said, "this beats —"

"Why, what does it mean, Wilton?" interrupted his spouse. "Where is the house? Why didn't you tell me that you — why, I don't understand!"

"You know just as much about it as I do. But I guess we won't find out anything here in the street. Driver, take us over to the Victoria."

"Wait," said the wife. "There come the trunks — two wagon-loads of 'em. Mercy! what shall we do with 'em?"

"We'll just have to have them sent to the Victoria, too."

And anon J. Wilton Burroughs and wife were registered at the hostelry and a small train-load of baggage was stored for them in the hotel basement.

And directly J. Wilton Burroughs addressed himself, with characteristic energy, to the task of finding out what had become of his house and some $200,000 worth of art treasures it had contained.

First he telephoned his two agents, Meekin, whose office was in Chelsea, and Banks, who did business in East Boston.

East Boston is an island, familiarly known as Noddle, and, on account of his extensive holdings in real estate there, Mr. Burroughs was sometimes called "the king of Noddle Island."

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Mr. Burroughs was a "promoter." The large sums he had made in his schemes he invested in real estate. He had his own notion of managing business, was a very secretive sort of man, and employed two agents to look after his holdings, lest one should imagine himself indispensable.

In due time Meekin and Banks met in the Milk Street office of Burroughs. Their chief stated his case. Neither of the agents, however, could give him any light.

"You know, Mr. Burroughs," said Meekin, "that you never committed your residence to my care, nor to Banks's. We supposed you had another agent. You've told us to mind our own business so often that we didn't feel like butting in, even when I drove past your place early in the summer and saw the workmen taking the house down."

"Taking it down?"

"Yes. They seemed to be taking it to pieces. It was the Enterprise Wrecking Company. I know that much. I saw their wagons. Why don't you call 'em up and enquire who hired 'em?"

Mr. Burroughs turned to the telephone.

"Who is this?"

"Enterprise Wrecking. This is Jones, the manager."

"Well, this is Burroughs, J. Wilton Burroughs. I want to ask about taking a house down, on Commonwealth Avenue."

"Why, we took that down for you, Mr. Burroughs, and you paid us for it. What do you want to know?"

"Oh, you took it down, did you? You admit that? Well, what right had you to do it without any orders? I've been in Europe a year."

"Say, I guess you're stringin' me, all right! Why, you came into my office personally last March, and engaged us to do the work."

Mr. Burroughs hung up the receiver in despair. He reached for a peppermint drop on his desk, and as he sucked it he gazed blankly at his two companions.

"What did he say?" asked Banks.

"He says I personally walked into his office last March and gave him the job. At that time I was being hauled round the

Island of Sicily so that every beggar and dago thief could get a whack at me."

"Somebody must have impersonated you," said Meekin.

"I should think Jones could be held responsible," added Banks.

"Well, I'll look the matter up. Good day, gentlemen. And, by the way, it would be just as well not to speak of this. I don't want it in the papers until I get a clue to the thief in the case. I guess I'll have no trouble in locating him. Surely people can't steal a house in broad day light in Boston and not be found out."

The two agents took their departure.

Mr Burroughs went over to see Jones. Jones swore up and down that on a certain day and date Mr. Burroughs himself, the same man to whom he was now talking, identical in face, figure and voice, employed him to demolish the residence in question, preserving all the parts as carefully as possible, and to deliver the same to the Boston & Albany railroad freight house. This had been done and they had been paid their price in cash, not by check. This story was substantiated by two clerks and the type-writing girl, each of whom positively identified Mr. Burroughs.

His next step was to visit the freight agent. Here he found that no consignment from J W. Burroughs had been received for over a year. Upon careful examination a record was discovered of a shipment of stone, brick and other building material, received in March from a George Wakely, of such an such a street and number, and forwarded to James Wakely, New York.

At the given address, Mr Wakely was found to be the head of a wholesale grocery house, and denied with amazement that he had ever shipped any building materials, in March or any other month, to New York or elsewhere. The freight agent and Mr. Wakely being brought face to face, the former identified the latter as beyond doubt the man who had shipped the goods and to whom the proper receipts had been given Payment had been made in this instance also by cash, and not by check.

At the New York end it was discovered that the shipment had been received and delivered, but nothing could be said further. The railroad company kept no record of whose teams had carted away the stuff; it only knew that a man purporting to be James

Wakely, armed with the necessary papers, had got the goods and signed the receipts.

Burroughs found out, likewise, that all the furnishings of the house had been carefully packed and shipped to the same James Wakely in New York.

Mr. George Wakely, the grocer, said he had never heard of a James Wakely.

Nels Nelson, the Swede, was next sought. He was easily found, although he had moved to Providence, where he was janitor of a large flat building.

Nelson asseverated that Mr. Burroughs himself, last February, had met him as he was closing the house, after giving it an airing, and had told him that he had returned sooner than he had expected, and that henceforth Nelson's services would no longer be required. Burroughs had paid him off and had given him some bonus. He was prepared to take his Bible oath that it was Mr. Burroughs, and not another, whom he had met and to whom he had delivered the keys. Nelson's reputation was that of an honest, industrious man.

Having gathered these bits of information, Burroughs went to his own office and sat down to digest them. He mused long and seriously, consuming meanwhile five cents' worth of peppermint drops, in his efforts to get to the bottom of the mystery.

And then, as if some one had struck him, he leaped from his chair with a cry:

"Desforges!"

It had flashed upon him, that this work had all the earmarks of the magician.

And then he recalled how he had become acquainted with Desforges, the magician, had learned that he had some money, had skilfully induced him to invest $25,000 in the Orizaba Rubber Plantation, promising quick and large returns, and how, after about a year, the whole enterprise had gone up in smoke, leaving all but J. Wilton Burroughs so much the worse for their investment.

He recalled distinctly the last time he had seen the magician. The latter had come to his office and Burroughs had told him how deeply he regretted the failure of the enterprise. He had expected

some outburst of rage, or some expression of disappointment, but he remembered how pleased he had been that Desforges had taken it so calmly. For he had only smiled, and said:

"Well, it's all right, Mr. Burroughs. I know you to be a man of unimpeachable honesty, and I have no doubt in the world that some day you will return me my money with interest."

He was now positive that the magician was in some way responsible for the disappearance of his goods and his house.

By calling up on the telephone various vaudeville agencies, Burroughs learned that Desforges was playing Chicago this week.

He secured the proper address and sent a telegram:

"Please notify me as to house, etc., immediately, and avoid trouble."

He got an answer the next morning, collect:

"Your message wholly mysterious. Talk English."

He returned:

"You had better come at once to Boston. Notify as to house or will swear warrant and arrest. Mean business."

And in reply he received:

"You must be crazy. If you want to see me you will find me in Chicago."

After thinking it over Burroughs decided to go to Chicago.

When Burroughs was shown up to Desforges' dressing room, he found the latter writing.

"Ah, Burroughs, glad to see you. Take a seat. I'll be through in a minute."

"See here, Desforges, I'm here for business, and I'm not going to be fooled with. I'm in earnest."

"Oh, all right! Take two seats, then. Just a minute."

Burroughs sat down, thoroughly mad. After a few moments the magician folded his letter, inserted it in the envelope, addressed it, and then, turning, said:

"Well, Mr. Burroughs, what can I do for you?"

"Now, look here, I don't want any fooling. What have you done with my house and its contents? It's you who did it. I know. So don't try any quibbling with me. I'll see if there's a law in this country that will punish thieves."

"Mr. Burroughs," said the magician calmly, as he began to

substitute a dress coat for his lounging jacket, "if you repeat your insinuation, I shall kick you downstairs. I think I shall kick you down anyhow, unless you come to the point, be civil and tell me what your business may be. You act as if you were either drunk or crazy."

Mr. Burroughs collected himself and said, more peacefully:

"I came back from Europe only to find that my house on Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, had absolutely disappeared. Some one impersonated me and discharged my care-taker and engaged a wrecking company to take apart my home. There is no doubt that this person was you. It is your trick. But you have gone too far this time. You have run up against the law, sir. You —"

"Now, Burroughs, there you go again! Keep cool! Go and tell your crazy story to any lawyer in the United States and if you can get him to believe you, then you may conclude you are not crazy. Your charge is preposterous."

"You did this to get even with me for the $25,000 you dropped."

"Now, listen to you! Have I ever kicked about my loss? Notwithstanding the other victims called you a thief and pretty near mobbed you, I took my medicine. I am a good loser. I think you told me so."

After a spirited half-hour's discussion, Burroughs had about concluded he was baffled, and arose to leave.

"A moment," said the magician. "Although it is absurd to tell any one I stole your house, you know my vanity and something of my ability, and I'll tell you what I will do. If you will come here tomorrow at this hour and give me your check for $75,000 in return for a nice bunch of stock which I have in the Orizaba Rubber Plantation, and will sign a statement to that effect, I will undertake — in fact, I will guarantee — to tell you where you may find your house, and also just where your furniture, including your art treasures, worth over a couple of hundred thousand, are stored. Now, don't do anything hasty. Think it over. Good day!"

The result of Mr. Burroughs' meditation was, that on the next day he returned.

"Now," said the magician, "I will tell you that you will find your house, the identical stones and as much of the same woodwork as possible, at a certain number on Fifth Avenue, New York. It is occupied by Mrs. Clara Wainwright, a widow, whom, you may remember, you swindled out of $38,000. When she appealed to you, reminding you that she would have to sacrifice her home in order to square herself, you recall that you professed yourself helpless, but asserted that if the time ever came when you were able, you would help her.

"Well, the time came last June, when you generously gave her your own house in return for the one she had lost by your rascality.

"In making my investigations, Burroughs, I came across some singularly scaly things in your career. I have in my possession, for instance, the document in the Maynard case."

Mr. Burroughs sprang to his feet with an oath.

"Sit down! It will do you no good to storm. I have the whip-hand now, and you know it. This is your day of judgment. I ought to send you to the pen, and I would, if I hadn't seen your daughter and her family.

"As it is, I shall content myself with evening up my personal score, and helping Mrs. Wainwright. She received a letter from you, presenting her with the house, and asking her as a favor, not to reply.

"Your goods you will find safely stored in the warehouse in New York City, whose address is on this card.

"Here you have a list of my expenses. The items include money spent in moving the house, and in storing the furniture and insuring the same, and also a few dollars to cover my interest, the trouble I have had and the wear and tear on my nervous system."

When Burroughs arrived home he found that the Boston papers had exploited his loss. He was besieged by reporters. J. Wilton Burroughs, however, simply put on a knowing smile, and guessed that he probably knew where his house was, and straightway his reputation for deep, fathomless, mysterious sagacity was still more widely acknowledged. His wife was told to keep her mouth shut, and she knew enough to obey.

"Banks," said Meekin one day when they met, "I'll eat my hat if old Burroughs hasn't been playin' us all for suckers in this house-disappearin' business. He did it himself. He as good as acknowledged it yesterday to me. Oh, he's a deep one!"

"Deep?" said Banks. "The bottom of a well is way up high, compared to old J. Wilton."

And they were proud to be rubbed with such a prodigy of shrewdness.

As for the magician: "Well," he said, "it was great fun, all right, but hereafter I think I shall invest my little savings in real estate, like Burroughs."

On the Other Shore.*

BY C. T. RYDER.

WHEN you have been paddling for a week and a half down an unmapped Canadian river, with very little variety of scenery and none whatever of anything else, when you begin to think it doubtful whether there is any way out, and highly improbable that you ever find it, when your companion's voice makes you wriggle and you hate to meet each other's eyes, then it is as good as being snatched from the jaws of death to see the smoke of somebody else's camp or the flick of somebody else's paddle down the next bend.

Arthur May and I were in the condition described on the twenty-eighth of August, 1904, at eight thirty in the morning. At that moment we slid out of a big bullrushy meadow upon a lake about five miles long by three miles wide, and probably very beautiful if one were in a condition to care. But the thing that absorbed our attention was a canoe drawn up on the other shore about a mile away, and the gleam of a duck tent through the trees.

I was in the bow, and as we paddled toward the camp I speculated upon the occupants. Not woodsmen: the tent looks too clean. Fishermen? Perhaps. Man and his wife? Perhaps. And I remember grinning at the idea of interrupting a honeymoon. As we came near the shore I thought I distinguished through the trees two persons sitting on the ground beside the tent, but before I had fully made them out the bow of our canoe touched the shore, and I jumped out and pulled up.

Down the bank to meet us came the most extraordinary spectacle of a man I have ever seen in my life. He was, I should think, between twenty-five and thirty years old, tall, and naturally of a powerful build, but in the most pitiful state of starvation.

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His shirt was open at the throat, and his bones positively glistened white through his brown skin. His cheeks were fearfully sunken — indeed, all that seemed to remain of his face was his beard and a pair of the most unearthly bright blue eyes. But the most astonishing and shocking thing about him was the perfect poise and good breeding with which he greeted us, just as though he were putting us at our ease at some commonplace reception in town.

"Good morning," he said, "My name is Waite — Chandler Waite."

We each uttered a host we could, returned his greeting and told him our names.

"Delighted to see you," he went on with that awful incongruous suavity of tone. "Though I do assure I can't offer you very hospitable entertainment. Won't you come up and meet my wife?"

He turned and led the way up the bank, and I remember stifling a quiver that was almost a laugh at the way his clothes looked in the back. At the crest he stopped and bowed back to us, his strange eyes directed towards us with the most indescribable lack of focus, like a man walking in his sleep.

"Margaret, let me introduce Mr Kimball and Mr. May; gentlemen, my wife."

She was sitting against a tree and she did not move to acknowledge the introduction. She was stone dead.

We looked back at Waite, expecting some instant sign of shock; but he showed no surprise.

"You will pardon her not rising — she has seemed very tired for some days. I am afraid the trip has been too much for her; she has always been somewhat delicate."

He evidently expected us to shake hands with her, and one after the other we lifted the pitiful little limp hand and dropped it back on her lap. She was very small and had been pretty, and she had evidently died in such a quiet, patient way.

Arthur and I looked at each other and grit our teeth. Arthur was the first to pull himself together:

"Mr Waite," he said, "I don't know whether you've had your breakfast yet, but we haven't had ours, and if you'll allow us to cook on your clearing we'll be very much obliged — possibly you'll join us if you haven't breakfasted."

The man said "Certainly," with an air of being glad to confer a favor. The idea of hunger had evidently passed completely out of his mind.

We built a fire, and brought coffee, bacon, and biscuit up from the canoe — only a little, because much will kill a man who has starved for many days. When everything was ready we served it to him in his own cup and plate. He took them, but only to set them down before the dead woman.

"Mr. Kimball and Mr. May have not breakfasted — shall we keep them company?" And the astonishing thing is, that when she did not touch the food he himself refused to eat. We urged him and plead with him, but with the same ghastly courtesy he remained firm. I think he no more knew that he was hungry than he knew that she was dead.

After the travesty of breakfast Arthur and I went down to the shore, ostensibly to wash the dishes, really to settle our course of action. Here we were, at large in the province of Quebec and more or less lost, with not more than enough provisions at best; and now, in addition to this, we were entrusted with the care of a man starved crazy and refusing to eat, and a dead woman whom he supposed alive. Plainly, Waite could not be made to eat in the presence of his wife's impassive corpse; plainly, too, there was no time to waste, for not only was Waite in the last stages of starvation, but our own stores were pretty low.

We went over all this together, and ended by deciding to try dinner and supper, hoping for some spontaneous clearing of Waite's mind. If none came, to risk the shock and try to explain to him the real state of the case. For the morning we made a division of labor. Arthur kept watch at the camp, while I searched the neighboring woods for berries, green acorns, anything to eke out our food supply. There was nothing — nothing but pines and scrub oak. There would be no resource but fishing, and it came over me like a crushing blow that we had lost our lines at the last portage. Obviously, Waite had none.

At camp Arthur had little to report. Waite had sat all the morning beside his dead wife, sometimes talking to her, sometimes whittling aimlessly at a stick, hardly noticing Arthur's presence.

Dinner was a repetition of the same grim farce which we had

witnessed at breakfast. Waite offered food to the dead woman, and when she did not move refused to eat anything himself. After dinner we exchanged canoes. Arthur took the canoe and explored the lake, looking in vain for the settlement for food, while I stayed at camp.

I suppose strange and terrible things are common enough in the world, and I hope I shall never live to go through anything more strange and terrible than what took place at that camp.

Waite sat for a while in silence, and then rose and went into the tent. He walked steadily now at first, with a distinct pause and effort before every step. In a moment he came back with a book, sat down again beside the body, and began to read aloud. The book was some French romance, and the incongruity of the thing was simply overpowering. He had been reading for about an hour, with great fluency and expression, when his voice suddenly sank and ceased in the middle of a sentence, and he toppled over across the body of his wife.

I went to him and put my ear to his breast. His heart was still beating, but fluttering, and only about forty to the minute. Left to himself he would not regain consciousness; he might die in five minutes, or live for an hour or two. I confess that for a moment I was tempted to let him die. If he were brought to he would probably refuse food again, and could only delay the inevitable a little while. If he recovered safely it would only mean a little longer delay, and it was already a question whether we could save ourselves, to say nothing of a helpless invalid; and even if we should get back out of the dismal scene of misery there was possibly one chance in a thousand that I would be without the wife who was evidently all he cared for in the world. And just here, I remember, the dreary thought went through my mind, What is a life worth, anyway?

I knew now that I should never have had the courage or will power to sit still and wait for that man to die, even if I had made up my mind to. Even while these thoughts were suggesting themselves to me, I had got the brandy flask, and was pouring a little of the liquor between his lips. His pulse strengthened, and his breathing became somewhat less shallow. I spread a blanket beside the tent — out of sight of the dead woman — and laid him

there, then made a little thin corn gruel, the nearest approach to invalid food that our supplies afforded, and forced it down his passive throat.

And now there was nothing to do but wait for Arthur. As I sat there I tried to plan for the future. When he becomes conscious, if his delusion persists, it will be the same thing over again. If he is sane, what can we tell him? If he sees the body, the shock will probably kill him or destroy his sanity again. My course was plain — I must bury the body at once.

There was no use hesitating. I lifted the body and carried it some hundred feet back from the lake; it was no heavier than a child. There I buried it, breaking the soft earth with my hunting knife and spading it up with my hands. Poor little girl.

It was sunset when I finished my work and came back to the camp. Waite was lying as I had left him, breathing as easily and regularly as in sleep. To my surprise, Arthur had not yet come back. I made more of the gruel and gave it to the unconscious man, then ate a little myself and lay back on the ground beside him.

I have no excuse except exhaustion, but contrary to all resolution and duty, I fell asleep. I must have slept about three hours. When I woke it was with a start, like a sudden sharp contraction of every nerve in my body. My eyes came wide open all at once, and I saw that it was night, and bright moonlight, and at the same instant I saw Waite standing erect in front of me. I lay there perfectly motionless, and I can feel now the way the skin seemed to tighten over my forehead. Of course the man was in my care, and I know I should have made him lie down again, but I assure you most solemnly that the idea of touching him was absolutely out of the question.

He stood there for a second or two, with the moon shining straight into his great, light-blue eyes, looking at nothing. Then, as I stared at them, they suddenly began to change and clarify like the image in an opera glass when you turn the screw. An indescribable difference came over not only his face, but his whole form, and he spoke the one word "Dead."

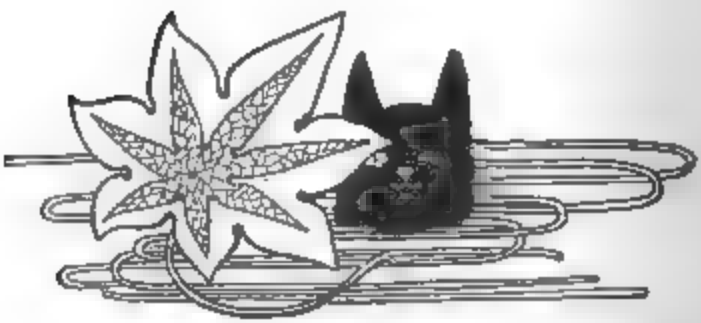
Then he spread his hands slightly toward the place where I had buried his wife, took a couple of steps, and fell full length on the

ground. When I reached the body the spirit of Chandler Waite had joined that of his wife on the other shore.

About dawn Arthur came back. He had found the outlet, followed it a mile or two to make sure, and got lost in a backwater. We buried Waite with his wife, and sank their canoe and kit in the middle of the lake, not liking to think of anyone else using them.

Some days later we reached the lumber village of Mushawee, and found that Waite and his wife had passed through there on their way up.

"Poor lad, poor lad," said our French-Canadian host. "He would take no advice. But ah, M'sieu', what love!"



Scovill's Sartorial Cyclone.*

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN.

HE big clock in Philadelphia's Broad Street station indicated the hour of noon, and beside the gate a uniformed attendant was intoning monotonously: "Twelve-ten-New-York express!"

As the crowd hurried along, Scovill stood a little way back from the crush, minus his overcoat and looking decidedly cool in the January air, despite well squared shoulders and healthy flush of cheek.

His eyes travelled anxiously back and forth, as the hand of the big clock passed on to twelve-two.

"Maybe he didn't come on at all!" Scovill bit his lips and his eager eyes grew more searching. "Lord! Perhaps he's forgotten about it altogether! Still, that isn't like Gladding. If ever a man had a real friend, it is Gladding."

Twelve-three. Scovill sighed and looked up and down, up and down, and then almost shouted:

"Gladding!"

A big, hearty, elderly man strode down upon him, newspapers, grip and umbrella clutched in one hand. The other he extended when still twenty feet distant.

"My dear Scovill! Bet you thought I wasn't coming, eh? . . . . . Phew! Twelve-five! Well, we have five minutes, anyway. Scovill, I have seen Cathcart—was at his house last night, in fact. He's all right, I'm certain. He has looked into your Fenville & Western proposition. He seemed fairly convinced."

"Good!"

"Now, Scovill, Cathcart has the money, as you know—barrels of it. If you handle him just right, you'll get every cent you need to swing your railroad. I told him you'd landed in Philadelphia

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sometime before this morning, and would probably get to his office this afternoon."

"Yes." There was a peculiar note in Scovill's voice.

"Cathcart must be handled just so. Give him all the time he wants, and treat him just so! See him at his office today. You probably will not accomplish much on the spot, but it's a hundred to one that he asks you to come to dinner tonight. Put on your dress togs and go and do the elegant—and then sail into him after dinner. Cathcart does all his really big business at home after dinner, you know, and that's the time to catch him in the right mood."

"All aboard," came from the gate.

Gladding grabbed Scovill's hand.

"See me tomorrow in the city if you have a chance, and let me know how it turned out. I think I've fixed everything—good by!"

He turned and ran through the gate at top speed, and Scovill was alone again.

"Treat him just so!" Scovill muttered. "Treat him just so! Do the elegant! What the devil would Gladding have said if I'd told him that now we must get the fare from Pittsburg here! And if I'd had the nerve, I suppose that he would have lent me—ban!"

Scovill walked almost abruptly, went downstairs, left the station, and headed forward through the raw wind at a pace rather above the average.

At the entrance of a big hotel he stopped, waited for the door to swing open, and passed in. The clerks nodded and smiled; two or three bellboys came forward expectantly and inquiringly, and fell back with pleasant grins. They knew Scovill of old at that hotel.

But Scovill was unresponsive today. He made for the elevator and was whisked to the third floor, and there, in a very comfortable room, when he had huddled over the heater for a minute or two, he sat down hard on the edge of the bed and stared at the opposite wall.

For a long time, he did not move. He was going over the history of that Fenville & Western Railroad, and lately it had become a doleful topic.

First of all, the road was Scovill, and Scovill was the road. He constituted the elected officers and the directorate, in actual fact — although suitable names of friends and relatives had been provided for legal requirements.

He had first perceived the need and the field for that road out West. At his own expense he had secured the charter and gone through all the necessary forms. Even the survey was almost completed — would have been completed, indeed, had not Scovill's limited capital become exhausted.

Why had he not secured backers? He had secured ample financial backing in old Wayburn. Wayburn's assurances had been ample — the old gentleman had even contributed a few thousand dollars, months back, when things seemed to be moving in first-class shape.

And then Wayburn had been so extremely inconsiderate as to die without warning, or provision for the Fenville & Western Railroad!

His executors, a most conservative pair of lawyers, who would have shrieked in horror at any investment more hazardous than United States Government bonds, had declined positively to allow the estate to become further involved in the affairs of the Fenville & Western road. More than that, they perceived that, as matters stood, a certain chance remained of debt accruing against them — and Scovill had been given no peace until he released the estate from any complicity in his scheme.

Now it would appear that a good railroad — even an unborn railroad — should have had no difficulty in securing funds for its furtherance. Yet Scovill had been utterly unable to procure the money he needed to push the Fenville.

For seven long months he had been laboring to secure capital on the terms he desired — and for seven long months he had been unsuccessful. His last move had been a trip to the West, as hopeless as the rest.

His diamond ring had passed beneath the sign of the three balls at Omaha; his handsome watch had found rest in a similar establishment a little to the east; other things had gone in the same way at other stops; the overcoat — yes, even the overcoat — had stayed behind in Pittsburg. Scovill, the man with a million-dol-

lar proposition, had arrived in Philadelphia without funds, save for a single ten-dollar bill!

A year ago he would not have believed such disaster possible. Now he was confronted with the actual facts. Cathcart was his very last hope. If Cathcart failed him, the Fenville & Western could go for a song, for he had no more time or energy to expend upon the road. An asset it was, beyond question, but the mere fact of its being an asset did not provide him with money for the living present. In the course of a few months, when he had found some other salaried means of livelihood, he might locate a speculative buyer for the Fenville rights, but now—!

Scovill frowned desperately as he canvassed the situation. By hearsay and personal experience, he was acquainted with Cathcart, and he must see him at his office that afternoon. Cathcart judged very largely by externals in some matters, and, as a rule, he was right and justified. If a man asking you for the best part of a million dollars appears in shabby clothes, there is apt to be a suspicion that his scheme is not all it might be. Cathcart had found it so in very numerous instances, and he was not averse to expressing the opinion.

And Scovill's clothes were not exactly new. There was no use denying it. The business suit he wore was last winter's, and it had seen real wear. At the sleeves there was a suspicion of fraying, the buttonholes, too, showed rather fuzzy in spots. With a roll of greenbacks in his pockets, Scovill would never have noticed it, but now the defects in his apparel loomed up ominously.

That Cathcart would see them and draw his own deductions, there was little doubt. Taken into consideration with Scovill's dinner-free and slightly haggard air, they would argue against the profit of Fenville & Western ownership; they would shout out the queer fact that he had arrived in Cathcart's office, in the dead of winter, without the conventional bit of cold weather garb—an overcoat!

The situation was by no means an imaginary one, as Scovill well knew. Cathcart was a queer customer to handle, one had to manipulate him in just such and such a manner, and, to do it successfully, all things must be favorable to producing the best impression possible.

And here he was, the interview hardly an hour off, almost certainly predestined to failure, because of improper raiment.

"DAMN!" said Scovill, as he rose and stamped across the room, and the word was in verbal capitals.

Fifty dollars would have done it — yes, he could have managed on fifty — for ready-made clothes usually fitted him. Why under the sun hadn't he mustered up courage enough to borrow it from Gladding?

But Gladding was gone, and Scovill felt as well satisfied. To the best of his recollection, never in his life had he borrowed from a friend, and he was not ready to begin now.

Down in the hotel office he could easily have obtained the money, but Scovill shuddered and walked to the window as he recalled a sudden hurried flight that morning when the clerk asked him for the time.

"Good heavens!" he muttered. "If the wind would only blow my way again for a while!"

The heater behind sizzled consolingly. Scovill lit one of his last cigars.

"If she'd only turn and blow my way again!" he murmured. "The whole thing bids fair to fall flat for the want of a decent suit of clothes and an overcoat! Bah!"

He was half way through the cigar, and no solution had appeared. He would have to go as he was and chance it, and a poor chance it seemed. He turned back with a groan, and somebody tapped lightly on the door.

"Come in!" he cried.

A bell boy entered softly, a huge box under either arm. He laid them on the bed and departed as swiftly as he had arrived.

"Here — say! Hold on!" shouted Scovill. "These boxes aren't mine! I say, boy!"

He stepped quickly into the hall — the elevator was just vanishing beneath the floor. He returned to his room and stared at the boxes. Brownley's! That was the clothing firm, was it not? Of course. He bent closer and examined the label, and then started back with a gasp.

"Mr. James Wilbur Scovill — paid."

Mr. James Wilbur Scovill — paid! For what on earth had he

paid? Nothing in the clothing line, certainly, thought Scovill, bitterly. Still, there were the boxes, addressed to him.

It must be some mistake. He looked the label over again. It was his own name, correct in all three subdivisions and marked for delivery at the hotel. Well, there must be another of the same title there. And yet, if there had been, the fact would have excited comment and he would have heard something of it. On the whole, the presence of another James Wilbur Scovill in the same house, at the same time, seemed most unlikely.

Ten minutes, perhaps, were consumed by Scovill in studying the labels. At the end of the time he straightened up with some decision.

"If it's clothes, Fortune's ashamed of herself and trying to square it with me. That's all!" he said whimsically.

The cord came off in a moment, the tissue paper was laid back. Scovill brought forth the contents of the first box—an overcoat! A long, black, handsome, modish overcoat, and decidedly an expensive one!

He slipped into it. Just a trifle large, even for his big frame, nevertheless it would pass very well for fit. And it was just the sort of thing he would have purchased, but for—he shrugged his shoulders, and the garment was removed and opened the other box.

It was a coat, as he had half feared, a business suit! Expensive, not ready-made. The fabric was tasteful and elegant, the cut exclusive. Scovill breathed hard as he removed his own coat and tried the new one. A trifle loose. He carried it well and comfortably, nevertheless. He walked about, moved his arms, glanced at his reflection in the mirror, took off the mysterious thing again and looked it over on the bed.

For a long time he stared at the array of desirable newness, frozed and very unbelieving. Could some charitable soul have donated the things? Emphatically, no. He had been hardly twelve hours in Philadelphia, he had no friends there, and—more than all—so far as he was aware, not a living being so much as dreamed of his plight, much less knew that he was in actual want. The gift theory was finally disposed of.

Of course, it was some absurd error. Whose? He cudgelled his brain and recalled, singularly, that he had noticed, some

months before, the absence of any J. W. Scovill from the Philadelphia directory. No, there must be another guest of that name in the house.

As casually as possible, he returned to the office and glanced over the register. No Scovills that day — nor yesterday — nor last week — nor yet, as he found after a search, during the past month. He went to his room and sat down.

Be the explanation what it might, the clothes were there, they were meant for him, and — the most vital point — he needed them as badly as ever civilized man needed fashionable raiment.

It was the work of a kindly Providence, and the best that he could do was to accept the dispensation in the spirit with which it seemed to have been made.

"The wind's blowing my way again!" observed Scovill, and he arose and threw off the coat and vest of which he was undisputed owner and once more examined the mysterious arrivals.

Half an hour later, James Wilbur Scovill, beautifully attired, walked out of his hotel and took a car. Another similar lapse of time, and he was handing the overcoat to Cathcart's secretary.

He left the office at five and walked back, for exercise, and a chance to think things over.

Cathcart had been impressed — whether or not it galled Scovill to have that truth forced upon him — Cathcart had been impressed by his words and his air of easy affluence, the latter as much as the former. In his sly way, he had appraised Scovill externally and found him satisfactory, he had tilted back in his leather chair and listened for a solid two hours to Fenvale & Western details. He had admitted the very apparent value of the proposition; he had admitted that at the moment he was perfectly able to finance the scheme as Scovill wished it financed. And at the end, when he had heard all and asked all his questions and had all the minor details made clear, he had arisen and patted Scovill upon the shoulder and said:

"It seems good, Scovill — I give you my word, it seems perfectly satisfactory in every particular. But — well, suppose you come to dinner this evening, eh? Eight o'clock or so, you know. There'll be no one there tonight, and afterward — perhaps we shall settle it."

And that was just as Gladding had predicted, and a very satisfactory state of affairs indeed, for had Cathcart been unwilling to proceed further, no invitation would have been forthcoming. Tonight, then, Scovill would sally forth with some gayety, carry the heavy conversation through an hour of wine and varied courses and then —

Scovill stood stock still in the center of Market Street! His face reddened, his breath came jerkily.

Dinner — that meant a suit of evening clothes! Scovill's evening wear had been left in St. Louis!

For a minute or two, Scovill leaned limply against an electric light post, until the questioning glances of a policeman sent him forward again.

Save for the minor details, he owned no evening attire on earth! Cathcart's people were at the very pinnacle of solid, exclusive society, to appear at that dinner in business clothes was absolutely out of the question, viewed from no matter what point.

He entered disconsolately on. Why on earth hadn't he thought of that before and wormed out of the dinner? Why had he allowed himself to be so carried away by the apparent success of his plans that the matter of clothes could escape him? What was he to do now?

His traveling bill was intact, but by no conceivable process could it be made to cover a servants' coat outfit. He knew no one from whom he could borrow or hire a suit, even had he so chosen. For the second time that day, Scovill found himself shamed by the condition of his wardrobe.

But as going seemed impossible, he would have to stay away. He would have to wire Cathcart — sudden illness or some similar lie. What would it mean? Scovill declined to think. Utter ruin, as likely as not, for Cathcart was rather peculiar. He would have to see him in the morning, and patch up the affair as best he could — but the chance to strike while the iron was hot had flitted away again. He sighed bitterly.

"Oh, it's — it's the limit!" he said, as the hotel lights came into view. "It's the outside limit!"

He trudged across to the elevator, and rode to his room.

The apartment was dark. His spirits were down again, and

he felt no particular desire for light. He strolled across and smoked and watched the bright windows of the building opposite.

After a time, as his eyes grew accustomed to the dark, he had an impression that some sort of package was on the chair at his side. His hands verified it. He hurried over and switched on the light.

One package? There were dozens of them! Big boxes and little boxes, small bundles and large bundles, littered the bed and the table and the chairs and the bureau! On the latter piece of furniture, too, lay several smaller parcels, wrapped in heavy white paper. He opened one with trembling fingers.

It was a watch — worth he could not say how much, but certainly valuable in the extreme. He caught his breath and gently laid down the precious thing. He opened the next box — a fob; the next held studs; the next a ring — far too large for his thin fingers; there were gold buttons and diamond links, there were scarf pins and tie fasteners! Scovill snatched up the wrappers and fairly glared at them. Every last one bore his full name, his hotel address and that mystic word "paid!"

"Well, what in the name of Creation!" he cried faintly, and sat down too hurriedly upon a big box that crumpled and broke beneath his weight.

In a bewildered way, he dragged it out, opened it and examined the contents. With fingers that were nearly numb from the utter amazement that filled him, Scovill felt over a suit of fine evening clothes, and then let them drop in a heap to the floor. That wrapper, too, was inscribed "James Wilbur Scovill!" That wrapper, too, had been marked "Paid!"

"Why — I — I — I — I don't understand!" his thick voice told the silent mirror. "It's — it's too utterly incomprehensible! It — pshaw!"

Scovill's brain was an organ capable of reasonably rapid readjustment. Within no very long space, he had reasoned matters out. The stuff was there. He had it in his possession, it was meant for him, and he needed it. Who had contributed it all or paid out the small fortune which it represented, was no immediate concern of his. Explanation there was none, save that some inscrutable power had taken him under its kindly wing. His

path for the present seemed simply that of unpacking, arraying himself suitably, and making for Cathcart's dinner in style.

He set about it quickly and methodically, and at the end of half an hour a mountain of brown paper stood in the corner, while all the furniture was piled with good things to wear. As methodically, and quite calmly now, Scovill took account of stock.

He owned two evening suits; he owned five business suits; he owned the overcoat of the afternoon and a mink-lined garment which could not have been bought under four hundred dollars; he owned two of the handsomest frock coats he had ever seen; he owned a silk hat, a crush hat and four derby hats; he owned more shoes, neckties, and other accessories than he had time to count!

"The wind's blowing my way again," said Scovill, "but it has turned into a cyclone now, and every blessed gust brings a new suit of clothes!"

At seven thirty he walked out again, perfect in his black raiment, resplendent in his fur coat, entirely pleased with the watch which ticked against his side.

It might have been Gladding's error, or his own imagination, but if Mr. Cathcart placed undue weight upon a man's appearance, he was about to receive such an impression of tailor-made opulence as would never afterward even such eyes as his!

. . . . . .

It was all over!

The last good-night handshake was behind him, and the butler had closed the door. Scovill was standing in Cathcart's vestibule at one o'clock in the morning, a man in the clouds, for his Fenville & Western Railroad scheme was financed!

The very last detail had been closed. Cathcart's lawyer had been present at the dinner, a fact which augured well from the first. He had adjourned to the library with the two men most interested and listened to the whole Fenville story over again. In the end, at a word from Cathcart, he had set about the hour's job of drawing up the papers on the spot.

And then, when they were signed, Cathcart had passed over his queer little engraved check for five thousand dollars, the amount which Scovill had asked to bind the deal. It nestled now in his wallet, one of the few of his own belongings which he had.

It was too utterly good to be true. His own money safe, his future and that of the road assured — and all because of the kindly hidden force that had turned his room into a clothing parlor. Scovill turned up his mink collar and prayed for a chance to reward the giver.

The snow was gathering as he stepped out, and the streets were entirely deserted. He noticed that particularly, for he was on the very verge of indulging an uncontrollable desire to shout.

And yet, at the corner, a man had appeared from somewhere and seemed to be following him! He did not turn, but at the next corner he paused and waited for an instant.

He had not been deceived. Steps were coming up very rapidly. Turning sharply, perhaps with footpads in mind, Scovill was startled to feel a heavy hand on his shoulder, to see an array of brass buttons, to hear a heavy voice:

"Mr. James W. Scovill, eh?"

"That is my name."

"And here's your warrant, my fine bird," pursued the officer of the law.

The grip on his arm tightened, and Scovill tried angrily to shake it off. As well might he have struggled in a vice. The fingers pressed into his flesh, and the voice, harder now, said:

"That'll do you, now! Squirming won't work with me, you know. You try to kick up a row, and I'll have half a dozen men here in five minutes. Come on!"

"Come where?" cried Scovill.

"Headquarters."

"Do you mean that I am under arrest?"

"Looks that way," said the officer, drily.

"And on what charge, pray?"

The officer laughed sneeringly.

"You've got the front all right!" He tapped the mink collar. "That! And I guess there'll be more coming in the morning, eh?"

"This coat —"

"Yes, that coat. Come on."

"But it was sent to me by —"

"Say, that's enough." The grip changed to an impatient jerk.

'You [illegible] that [illegible] gave a worthless check for [illegible] payment. You preferred the [illegible] and the folks there [illegible] they were [illegible], you see. Mr. [illegible]'

[illegible]

'You [illegible] your [illegible] Mr. [illegible] snow and [illegible] explaining [illegible]'

[illegible] on his arm [illegible]

[illegible] that had supplied [illegible] material things. [illegible], it was a mighty [illegible] for Scovill. But who [illegible] of a prank?"

[illegible] and he gave it [illegible] calculated when [illegible] was pretty certain [illegible] opened [illegible] of stuff, [illegible]

[illegible] watchful [illegible] latter found [illegible] into a large [illegible]

[illegible], and his eyebrows [illegible]

[illegible]'

'Yes.'

'[illegible] Scovill admiringly, it [illegible] you now, I [illegible] this evening. [illegible] and a good [illegible] reported. You're a slick one, ain't you?'

"See here, my man!" cried Scovill, angrily. "There are a good many things I do not understand in this matter, but I'll give you to understand, right now, that —"

"Just let's see that watch," suggested the sergeant.

The officer removed it deftly and unexpectedly, and handed it over the desk. His superior referred for a moment to a typewritten page, and nodded wisely.

"The same," he observed. Then he glanced down and chuckled. "And there's the swell coat he got at Rigg's, hey? Say, d'ye own anything you're wearing tonight?"

"I —" Scovill shouted, and he felt his face turning a brilliant red, and stopped suddenly.

The sergeant sobered.

"Well — we'll take down a few details about you. Name?"

"My name is James W. Scovill, and —"

"That's all I want to know just now. Occupation?"

The officer tittered audibly, and the sergeant's dry grin appeared. Scovill's blood boiled up.

"You infernal —" he began furiously.

His words were cut short by the sudden clatter of a telephone on the desk.

For some minutes the sergeant listened, putting in a word only here and there.

"Oh, he's come around, eh? . . . Scovill? J. W. Scovill? . . . yes. . . . Don't have to send for him. He's right here in this station now. . . All right."

He hung up the instrument and looked curiously at Scovill.

"Know a young feller named Blaney?"

"Who?"

"Blaney — George Blaney."

"No."

"Know anything about a young feller that was knocked senseless by a cab at noon today in front of your hotel?"

"I had heard nothing of it."

"Well, this man Blaney was knocked out there at five minutes to twelve, and he only came out of his trance about fifteen minutes ago. He's been asking to see you ever since, and the hospital people wanted you sent for."

Scovill shook his head.

"I don't know the man."

"Well," the sergeant scratched his chin, "he seems to know you, Scovill. I couldn't say whether he's going to die or not, but he wants you, anyway. I'm. You take him over to the hospital, Carver."

At two o'clock they were ushered into a long, bare ward.

Down at the farther end of the room, a large young man was stretched upon a cot, his head bandaged and his face very pale.

His eyes were startled as they rested upon the officer, but they twinkled suddenly with recognition as they fell upon the mink-lined overcoat.

"You're Scovill?" he asked faintly.

"That is my name."

"Mine's Blaney. I'm a — " he glanced flittingly at the officer — "well, I'm a sort of crook!" He faced Scovill again. "Say, did you get clothes enough this afternoon and evening?"

"Clothes?" stared the other. "I —"

"Well, I see you did," smiled the sick man. "Say, I'm sorry I made trouble for you. It sounds queer, but I am. I was getting tired, I guess — anyway, I didn't turn crooked till recently. I'm so fixed. Then I took to doing a little work in the old way."

"But this —"

"Oh, it's a game I've worked before. I knew it would come out now when I saw you so soon. I thought I might as well save you trouble. I'll be all the same for me, anyway.

"When I get low on clothes, the way I did this time, I just rose around till some fellow turns up at a hotel, as you did — somebody that's well known at the house and supposed to have the coin. Then I get introduced, order a bunch of the glad rags, all over town, you know, and give checks for them with his name on, the same as I did today. After that I wait outside, hold up the messenger, and sign for the stuff when I take the goods! I've got a room next door but one to your place, and if that blamed cab hadn't smashed me when it did, I'd have gathered in clothes enough for the year. My line is the swell bunco game, you know," he ended.

"And so you ordered all the things?"

"Every last one — and I reckoned on landing half of 'em at least."

Scovill watched the pale face for several minutes. Then he turned to the officer.

"You've heard all this."

"Yes, sir."

Scovill gathered his dignity again.

"I wore this coat tonight, because I supposed it to be a gift. Now that it appears otherwise, I shall pay for it anyway. I presume that I am no longer under arrest?"

"You'll have to go back with me, sir."

"And what then?"

"Well, I guess if we get the judge out o' bed to discharge you, he won't kick when he hears the details," said the officer.

Somewhere in the neighborhood of dawn, Scovill returned to the hospital and gained admittance to the charity ward.

Blaney was still awake, and he looked up questioningly at the appearance of his victim, for Scovill's smile was soft and friendly.

"See here, young man," he said, in an undertone, "I — I, well, I don't want to see you suffer for this. You're too young not to be put straight. I'm going to pay for all the stuff you ordered, and fix things so that you can go free."

A hand suddenly found his and pressed it weakly.

"They say you're going to get better soon. If you want to live right, I'll give you a job on a railroad out West, within a month or two."

The hand pressed harder. Scovill smiled and rose. He said good night and walked to the door; and there he turned and hurried back, and, leaning over the cot, dumfounded Blaney with:

"And say, old man, I want to thank you from the very bottom of my heart!"

A Priestess of the Occult.*

BY ELIZABETH PAYNE.

IT'S a mighty queer thing, the way a college education can change a nice girl.

When our Nan was living home, going to high school, there wasn't a girl in our village could hold a candle to her. Of course, she gobbled chocolate creams and scrapped and cried and giggled in school, the way any ordinary girl does, but she was a tiptop good fellow, all the same.

She never minded your borrowing her penknife, and she always happened to have a nickel about her when a chap needed one without wanting to know what he needed it for.

She hadn't any of that aggravating habit of calling you back when you were in a hurry, to close the door or put on your rubbers.

She always saw you when you were dressed up with your kid gloves on, going to Sunday School, and she *didn't* see you when you and the gang were wearing around the corner on some private business that you had on hand.

And she *never* told tales.

I heard Uncle Perry say to Father once, that young Widow Davis was a mighty's woman. I don't know exactly what that means, but it must be something peculiar, for the Widow Davis is. Sometimes she has two or three waiting to beau her home from prayer-meeting—and not all widowers, neither.

Anyhow, if that's what things as men's women, our Nan was growing up to be one, sure, before she went to college.

But, great Scott! the change an education made in that girl! She was just as sweet tempered and generous, but she didn't seem to take any more interest in boys and she wasn't more'n half as obliging.

If she hadn't been our Nan I'd 'a' said she'd got a swelled head.

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I had hoped, naturally, that when college got through with her she'd know something about football and baseball and not make such an unfortunate idiot of herself asking fool questions; but a girl's college ain't so much in the way of education.

They can't very well teach women more'n their minds will hold, I daresay, and they have to bring the course down, more'n for us men, so as to get within their limit.

It was mighty lonesome for father and me in the big house, those four years Nan was at college. Father set great store by her being at home again, and the June she graduated he had the place all done over for her.

The house was painted and he bought a lawn mower. There was a new parlor set and hammocks for the porch, and we had a man down from the Centre to tune the piano, so's it would be pleasant when Nan's beaux called.

We knew there would be plenty of them — if Nan was anything like the way she used to be at high-school. And there was always Roger.

If father and I missed her those four years, Roger missed her worse, you can bank on that. There was hardly a night he didn't walk up past our house with a mournful look at her windows — which I should judge was pretty faithful.

When Nan went to college Roger went into business. By the time she graduated he was making a tidy living, and father had an eye on him for Nan, all right.

But it would stagger you, the notions that a female college can put into a girl's head. Nan hadn't been home but a few weeks before she began to get restless, and when a girl gets that she's out looking for trouble — you can bet your bottom dollar on that proposition

Father was dreadfully concerned He'd do anything to please Nan. She had wanted an education, and he had let her go away and get it; but now she'd got it he wanted her to stay home awhile and just loaf like other girls, playing the piano and going on picnics and dressing up, until she got good and ready to settle down and get married.

When father said that, he winked across the table at Roger, who had come to dinner.

Nan tossed her head, but she blushed, and Roger looked comforted.

She said something about "settling down to the monotonies of married life not being the only vocation open to the thinking women of the century." Pa laughed, but Roger frowned. He don't seem to care for thinking women — and no more do I.

Nan got more'n more restless and discontented. You could see she looked down on the village girls. She said their existence was vapid and meaningless. She tried the young married women and found that theirs was sordid and stagnant.

She said she wanted to find the deeper meanings of life, but she seemed to look for them in books instead of people. Maybe, though, the people of our village didn't have any.

She let on that she craved to be thrown with thinking minds, so father invited the minister and his wife to tea.

The minister's wife is pretty nearly always tired, but she never refused an invitation out to tea. She wore her black silk that she wears to funerals and Christmases and Easters, in honor of Nan's college education.

It was great to hear Nan and the minister talk. They used such monstrous long words that father and I were left clear at the post. My! but our Nan could cut a swath with language! The way she could sling the English was enough to be the despair of any man who had to write compositions.

She looked just as sweet as a peach in her white dress while she was telling them that she had no use for the butterfly existence of the girls of our village. She said that every thinking woman must have an ideal and a motive in her life. She told them that if one conscientiously held one's soul open and receptive to the impressions of the forces of the vast illimitable they would enter and take possession and one's work would be pointed out.

I saw the minister smile behind his napkin. I guess it was at the idea of the forces of the vast illimitable squeezing themselves into our Nan's soul.

The minister's wife looked sort of blank and asked me to pass the currant jam. Then she changed the subject by telling father about the plan to re-carpet the church parlors.

It was pretty nearly the first of August when Nan formed the

"Cult." It was made up of herself and six other girls who had time to burn. They had seven because that is the mystic number.

She told father and me all about it one morning at breakfast. She said they were seven earnest kindred spirits who had banded together to pursue an extended research in the realms of the occult. Thy would undertake, she said, to make a systematic and scientific investigation of supernormal manifestations as shown by hypnosis and mental telepathy, and would seek to solve some of the mysteries of the unseen psychic forces that influence us.

Father didn't seem quite clear as to just what she meant, but he told her he was glad she had found something to amuse herself, and if she could get any fun out of the occult, why to fire away and he would stand the expense.

Nan had the south attic cleared out. There is a big skylight in the roof — father had it built in the year Nan thought of being an artist — and the girls fixed the old place up to beat the band. They didn't have any chairs — only couches around the walls. Instead of wall-paper there were cream-colored draperies, and everywhere were tiny little blood-orange glass lamps. It was great. The lamps didn't give much light — they just glowed — and through the big skylight you could look right up at the stars, which seemed wonderfully near.

The girls named it the "Twilight Room" and called themselves "priestesses." They all had trailing white robes — something like kimonos, only fuller — and they used to lie around on the couches and gaze up through the skylight at the stars while Nan played to them on the 'cello.

Nan couldn't play the 'cello a little bit, and sometimes it squeaked like the dickens. She wanted an æolian, but father couldn't quite see it that way. He said he was willing to buy a pianola for the front parlor if she wanted it, to help make the house cheerful evenings, but as for buying organs for the south attic and having to listen to Good-Friday music moaning through the house on week days, he wouldn't stand for it. So they got along with the 'cello.

Nan tried to get father interested in the "Cult," but he said he had too much business on hand to go digging after the illimitable. He said he'd been raised to believe that decent spirits kept

themselves where they were sent, and he had no use for any who prowled around, letting out the secrets of the unseen to inquisitive and prying humans.

Father visits mother's grave regularly, rain or shine, every week, and on Sundays he sits in her room a while and reads out of her books. In church, when the minister says anything about our dear ones who have gone before, father always wipes his eyes. But when Nan started in to talk about it to him he got downright worthy. He said mother's soul was in heaven. As for her astral body presiding over the processes of his daily ablutions and dinners, it was all damned tommyrot and he didn't want to hear another word of it.

He got madder'n a hornet, too, when Nan asked if he would mind if she changed her name to "Euphrosyne." "Nancy," said he, was such a commonplace name. She wanted a name she could feel she must live up to.

Father snapped out that "Nancy" had been good enough for his mother and his mother's mother and he reckoned if she lived up to their memories she'd have her hands full.

As for "Euphrosyne," he said he thought it had a sort of heathenish sound, anyhow.

The next few weeks Nan was lots more contented. She sat on the porch and read deep looking books from the library and seemed the "Cult" had lots of business together day-times and evenings.

For thinking minds they seemed to do an awful lot of talking — especially Sophie Atkins. I'd like to bet Sophie didn't care a cuss about the illimitable — she knows more about making fudge — but she'd hang, tooth and nail, on to any scheme Nan might suggest.

Sophie's one of those tender, peaches and cream girls, with dimples. What she didn't know about the occult would have filled a book, but you could see she was trying hard.

Nan did a lot of chasing around in the wet grass that summer, looking up at the stars, and she had a cold in her head most of the time. One night she sneaked out long after we were all in bed. I heard her, and hustled on some clothes and followed her, for fear of tramps.

She had on her priestess suit and she held it up high in both hands and stepped gingerly, going through the meadow, on account of the field mice.

Climbing over the snake fence at the edge of the glen, my foot slipped. Nan heard me and turned around with a jump. First she was mad at my coming after her; but when she found it was to protect her and not from idle curiosity, she was quite obliged and said I was a good boy, but that I had better run home and get in bed.

I asked her where in time she was going, and she told me, real kindly and with a sort of lifted-up look, that she had stolen out to commune with the sighing night winds and the singing night birds, under the radiant eye of the night.

"Martin," said she, still grabbing her train high up away from the field mice, with both hands, "do you not know that I am a humble seeker after Truth?"

"Humph!" said I. "If you don't look out you'll run right into it, and it'll be plain influenza."

I followed her again after she got into the woods a way. She didn't go far. The radiant eye of night got in some fine work throwing suspicious shadows around the tree trunks and the night winds seemed to do all their sighing in the bushes just behind her. And when one of the night birds — a bat, it was — swooped against her face, the priestess didn't wait to commune. She just tucked up the extra yards of her robe and took a sneak for our house.

In fact, she got over the ground so fast that she left one of her slippers in the cornfield and had to stay in her room for three days, nursing a bruised foot.

But I never peached. That's how I got my Brownie camera.

I heard Uncle Perry asking Father what Nan really was after. They were drinking mint juleps out on the side porch one hot afternoon. I was watering the lawn, and I remember there was the cool smell of the dust being laid on the walks.

"She calls herself a seeker after Truth," said Uncle Perry, jiggling the ice in his glass with a sort of contented expression, "but what kind of truth is it anyhow — spiritualism or hypnotism or just plain, ordinary Christian Science, or what?"

"Hanged if I know what she wants!" snapped out Father. "But I know well enough what she *needs*. It's a plain, ordinary man for a husband and half a dozen obstreperous young ones to keep her hands busy. That's what she *needs*."

"'F I was Roger Calhoun," said Uncle Perry, "I wouldn't stand for it — not a minute. And he won't Sir, not much longer. There's plenty of girls in this town just as well-favored as Nancy — and without any notions in their heads."

"She's a good girl, Nan is," father went on, "only a little headstrong; and that blamed college education has put ideas into her head about knowing things. Just give her the bit for a spell and she'll slow up herself and come out all right, like any other woman. What I'm worrying about is that Roger'll be the one to go over the traces. He's getting too mad to wait — and I wouldn't want Nancy to lose him."

No more would I. Roger has one of those noble, thoughtful dispositions, as well as being so generous. He is my ideal for a brother-in-law, and I did feel sore that Nan's foolishness might be the means of losing him to our family.

Father was dead right, too, about Roger. He was getting more'n' more restless. He had been pretty faithful for six years, but that was before he realized that Nan was growing to be a "thinking woman" with ideals and aims.

First he had laughed at what he called her schoolgirl nonsense, but when he began to see how important it was to her, and that she meant to stick to it, he looked determined around the chin.

He reasoned with her a lot — out in the hammock, evenings — after he found he couldn't laugh her out of it. But you can't really reason with women — you have to teach 'em lessons. Roger knew that, and he started in all right with the red-headed girl over Two Forks way.

She is one of those plump, cuddly little things, and I don't believe she has an idea deeper than an ice-cream saucer. Our Nan could give her cards and spades on looks and beat her out easy, but Nan didn't seem to care — at least she didn't show that she cared — when Roger drove the other one by in his new rubber-wheeled runabout or asked her to have refreshments at the band concerts.

I was terribly worried, myself, for I didn't want that red-headed girl to get a generous chap like Roger, and it looked like she was going to turn the trick all right, unless Nan kept her eyes peeled.

Roger and Nan had it out one afternoon in the front parlor. I was in the corner back of the piano, and could hear everything they said. Not that I meant to interfere, of course, but I felt that it would be well for me, as a member of the family, to lend Nan the moral support of my presence. (You can't see moral things. You can only feel them.)

Roger talked a long time, but what he said didn't seem to cut any ice. It seemed that Nan didn't really object to him — only she didn't want any interference in her appointed lifework.

She told him that it had been borne in upon her that the future for which she was destined could not be lived on any man's hearthstone, but only in the wider sphere of thought and research.

"I feel," she said, as solemn as an owl, "the call of the Unsolved."

Roger appeared pretty blue, but she went on to assure him very sweetly indeed how fond she was of him and how she hated to disappoint him. She said that if he did not mind her living her life as the finger of her destiny seemed to beckon she would be willing to link her life with his; but that she would not brook any interference in her chosen pursuits. She did not wish to feel the trammels of masculine limitations upon her career, nor did she intend to sacrifice it for any inconsequent trifles of domesticity.

At this Roger began to get very hot under the collar. I can't remember just his words — it nearly swamped me, trying to remember Nan's — but what he said was that he wasn't going to have any more backing and filling, that Nan was either to give up this insufferable tomfoolery or him — and he would let her have just ten minutes to decide.

Well, the upshot of it all was that he left in a towering rage and banged the front door so hard it shook the whole house.

I rather think Nan expected him to come back. She didn't eat any supper to speak of, and she sat all the evening in the west corner of the porch, where you can look down street toward the

village. But Roger never showed up and about nine o'clock she sneaked off to her room and had a good old girl's cry.

On Sunday after church she kind of lingered around, waiting to see if Roger would join us as usual and come home to dinner. He had never missed a Sunday in six years when Nan was in town.

But this Sunday he hurried out without even looking toward our pew, and I saw him join the red headed girl from down Two Forks way on the steps outside. They strolled along together, Roger taking hold of her elbow, the way they do to help 'em over the crossings.

Nan held her head mighty high. She hasn't got a great deal of neck, but what there is was stretched clear to the limit. I felt real sympathetic for her that day, for I know how it is when you want to keep from crying before folks, if you hold your head very high, and tip it back far enough, looking haughty, you can keep the tears from dropping out of your eyes.

I saw Nan was trying to do that and I did feel sorry for her. But a fellow can't *say* anything, of course.

Roger didn't come around for more'n a week. He never even walked by the house, though Nan took to sitting still on the front porch evenings instead of wandering around, looking up at the stars and communing. She grew whiter every day, but she kept a mighty stiff upper lip and pretended she didn't care a continental.

One night there was to be a special meeting of the "Cult." The Twilight Room had been swept, and all the lamps were lit and it did look out and out swell. Billy Atkins came around after supper to borrow my golf clubs and I took him up the back way and let him have a look at the room.

"Gee!" he said, "Ain't it corkin'? What do they do?"

"Why, nothing much," said I. "They just commune."

"Commune with what?" asked Billy in a trifling sort of way.

"With the unseen," I told him with my most superior manner. "They sit around here dressed in white suits and wait for the unseen to turn up."

"Has any turned up yet?" he whispered, looking real interested.

"Why, no," said I. "Not yet, but they keep on thinking that something'll happen if they wait long enough"

"Shucks!" said Billy. "Don't they have anything to eat?"

"Certainly not," said I in a withering tone. "They're not thinking of *eating*. It's the occult they're after."

He looked at me for quite a while with one eye closed. Then he took hold of my sleeve.

"Say, Martin," said he, "it's a durned shame, don't you think, for those girls to sit here night after night and nothin' doin'? Say, let's give 'em a surprise. Say, it's a cinch." He kept pulling me by the sleeve until we got around behind the barn. Then he planned the whole thing out so there wouldn't be any hitch.

Nan was out on the porch waiting for the other six to come along, when Roger drove by with the girl from over Two Forks way.

Roger never so much as looked at the house, but the red-headed girl, she leaned far out and smiled and bowed. Nan got up quick and went into the house. She was pretty pale, but her teeth were set mad enough to bite nails.

The girls didn't have a very lively meeting that night—at least they didn't do the usual amount of talking. Billy and I were crouched down behind chimneys as near as we could get to the skylight. The roof has quite a slant on that side and we had some trouble hanging on there unless we kept close to the chimneys.

It was a pretty hot night and the skylight was propped up a little way for air, but we didn't hear anything from the Twilight Room except now and then a yawn, and once I heard somebody sigh — I think it was Nan.

After awhile they began to get restless. One of 'em said:

"Euphrosyne, I do not know how it is with you, but I find my astral garment stiflingly hot. Couldn't we have the skylight up a little further?"

"It's stuck," spoke up Belle Johnson. "I tried it, myself. Heigho," — with a monstrous yawn — "I wonder what time it is."

"I'm so sleepy," complained Sophie from a corner, "I can't keep my eyes open much longer. I've tried and tried to hold my

mind open to the impressions of the illimitable, but it keeps wandering all the time — and both my feet are asleep."

"For my part," put in another priestess boldly, "I'm getting just a little tired of waiting for manifestations that don't manifest. I don't know, anyhow, what we are wasting our time for in this stuffy room on such a gorgeous moonlight night."

"Yes," pouted Sophie who was always ready to follow any one else's lead, "I had an invitation to walk down to the old mill."

"And I," added another of them, "could have gone rowing on the river."

"I say," spoke up Maggie Tilton, "Let's cut the whole business and go down town for ice-cream sodas."

"My sisters, My sisters!" sighed Nan in a discouraged tone. "What are you saying? At this very moment the air above us may be tremulous with the unfolding of mystery. Would you, by these impatient and unseemly suggestions, intimidate the shy, unseen friends who may perhaps be hovering just overhead? We, the faithful seekers after Truth, groping in unseeing —"

It was at this moment that Billy commenced to get busy and skipped the first pebble across the glass of the skylight.

Nan let out a little squeak, and we could hear them huddle together down beneath us. This was the real cheese. The occult was coming, sure enough! They would be able to take it right off the bat.

"Nan — I mean Euphrosyne," gasped Sophie in a scairt voice. "They're *here*."

"Pshsh!" whispered Nan, sort of awesome. "It looks like it."

I skipped another stone.

"Oh-h," shuddered one of the priestesses, "I don't like it much."

Another one giggled, but our Nan is game all right. She stepped under the skylight and looked up.

"Spirits of the unseen," she began. "We hear thee and we crave an answer to the questions of which our longing souls are full. Some manifestation we beg —"

Billy skipped a couple more stones, and we kept it up for a little while. They listened as still as mice. Then they began to ask questions. They fired 'em at us pretty lively. Most of 'em

was about lovers. None of 'em was about careers except Nan's, and she asked for guidance.

When there were no answers — only the stones — they seemed to grow a little discouraged. Then we heard some one touching up the strings of the 'cello.

Billie dug me in the ribs.

"They're going to charm the occult with a tune," said he. "Hope it'll be suthin' lively."

Nan sounded a quivery note, and Billy whipped out his harmonica and answered with a wail that would 'a' made your hair rise.

Then she started in on the "Angel's Serenade." Billy Atkins has a good ear for music and he followed along a close second. It was great.

He struck a wrong note, however, and got off the key and we got a'snickering so he lost his balance and went sliding and scraping down the slant, making the dickens of a racket on the tiles.

I don't believe we were more scairt, though, than those girls. The "Cult" broke up in a hurry and we could hear them swarming down the attic stairs in a bunch. I shouldn't wonder if they thought the spirits they had conjured up were from the wrong place.

I hid behind a lilac bush in the front yard to hear what they said as they went out, but not one of 'em uttered a peep. They toddled out of the gate and down the road, crowding against each other, and when they got to the turn toward the village they broke into a regular skedaddle and bolted. Guess they had had all the truth about the occult that they wanted — for one while.

Nan was sitting in her window with her elbows on the sill and I didn't dare to come out from behind the lilac bush. It was pretty late, and I knew if she saw me up at that hour she'd be on.

She sat very still, meditating, and after a while she began to cry. Every few minutes she would lean out and look down the road toward the bridge, and all of a sudden it came over me that she was watching to see Roger and the red-headed girl come back from their drive. It was about time for them to be getting home. The moon was at the full and you could see any one passing in a carriage as plain as day.

I felt awful sorry for Nan, then, for I knew she cared, after all.

The grass was wet, and I was shaking with cold. I wondered how long she would sit up there and watch. I began to listen for the sound of wheels on the bridge, myself.

The town hall clock down in the village struck twelve. A pretty time it was for that red-headed girl to be getting home! It'd be one before they reached Two Forks. I'd like to see Father let our Nan be out buggy-riding as late as that.

I could see that Nan was getting lower and lower in her mind. She had stopped crying and her head dropped down on her arms on the window sill. She didn't move for so long that I concluded she must be asleep. I was just making up my mind that it would be safe for me to take a sneak for my room when she opened her eyes and got up from her chair.

I was half way up the path, when the front door opened and Nan stepped out on the porch. I drew back in the shadow and hoped she hadn't seen me. If this was going to be another still hunt for the unseen, of course I would have to follow her, but I certainly did want to go to bed and get warm.

She came down the path in the moonlight with her eyes fixed straight ahead of her and her long white priestess robe trailing over the gravel. The look she had in her face made me feel sort of creepy all over.

She hadn't more'n turned out of the gate when Sophie Atkins came tearing out of the house, pulling on Nan's rain-coat over her nightdress as she ran.

When she saw me she grabbed hold of me quick.

"Oh, Martin," she sang out, "Did you see her? Which way did she go?"

"She's gone toward the bridge. What's up?" said I.

"She's walking in her sleep," gasped out Sophie Atkins.

She pulled me along out of the gate and down the road after Nan. We could see her ahead of us, slipping along over the grass at the edge of the road and heading straight for the old wooden bridge across the creek. She was walking pretty fast. She seemed to just float along and her long robe trailed out behind her at every step. We had to hustle to keep an even distance behind her.

"How do you know she's walking in her sleep?" I asked Sophie. "She's been out before like this at night. She calls it communing with the night winds and seeking after truth."

"Hush," whispered Sophie, "don't speak so loud. It never does to wake them up too suddenly. I *know* she's asleep. She walked right past my bed and never heard me when I spoke to her. It seemed as though she looked right *through* me."

Sophie shivered.

"She's been excited all the evening," she went on. "She acts as though there was something on her mind."

Of course I knew what it was, but I wasn't telling. Sophie Atkins isn't one of our family. I knew, too, that Nan was probably going out now to look for Roger and the red-headed girl, but I wasn't giving that away, either.

"What are you going to do?" I asked, trying to keep step with Sophie's little trot.

"I shall try to waken her gently without frightening her," said she. "Why, our Billy often walks in his sleep. Pa used to tie him in bed. Now we keep a piece of oilcloth on the floor so's the cold shock to his bare feet will wake him before he gets anywhere."

"Maybe," I suggested cheerfully, "Nan will walk into the creek. It isn't deep there, and the cold water'll wake her up in a jiffy."

"Hush!" said Sophie, stopping short in the road. "What's that, Martin? It sounds like a team coming."

Sure enough, it was. I knew right off that it was Roger and the girl from down Two Forks way. The moon was so bright that you could see his brown mare and the runabout in the curve of the road across the creek.

I wished then that I had run right after Nan, instead of taking Sophie's advice about not waking her. She would just about meet them on the bridge and my heart commenced to thump against my side for fear she wouldn't have sense to take the foot path. I started for the bridge on a run with Sophie puffing along after me.

There is a wide ledge built along the top of the partition that divides the roadway from the footpath on the bridge. It is quite

high — when you sit in a buggy you can't see over it. We boys often climb up there and walk along the top.

As I came close to the bridge I saw Nan swing herself up to the ledge and walk out on it toward the centre of the bridge. In that long white dress, shining in the moonlight, she did look ghostly up there. The breeze whipped out her skirts toward the roadway, and I wondered, racing along, what Roger's brown mare would do.

The whole thing happened in about half a minute. Roger's runabout swung around the turn and they were on the bridge before they saw Nan. I saw Roger sit forward and grab the reins tight, but it was too late.

The mare stood right up on her hind legs and tried to back. Then she gave a plunge across the bridge and I saw the runabout tip up on two wheels. The red-headed girl seemed to fly through the air on one side and Roger jumped clear of the reins on the other, while the mare with the bit in her teeth shot past us, the empty runabout swinging at her heels.

When the red headed girl went over she let out a screech that you could have heard clear to the Centre. It was probably that, that waked up Nan. We saw her throw out her arms and sway, up there on the ledge. Then down she came, all in a heap, on the boards of the roadway.

It seemed a year before she came to. She lay with her head in Sophie's lap and Roger chafed her hands. They kept me running down to the creek to fetch water in my cap. The tears were so thick in my eyes for fear she was killed, that I could scarcely see, but I did notice that the red headed girl was sitting on a stone all by herself, trying to tie a handkerchief around a plump ankle.

After a long while Nan opened her eyes and sighed. Then she tried to sit up and whispered — so low you could scarcely hear her —

"Roger!"

He bent over and lifted her up in his arms and held his face down close to hers and they didn't either of them seem to remember that there was any one else there, until the red-headed girl spoke up in a snippy kind of way:

"After the important Miss Carruthers has been attended to, perhaps you will kindly remember that *I* am your guest and would like to get home to-night."

Roger looked down at her over Nan's head, which lay against his shoulder.

"I beg your pardon," he said, real polite. "I regret that you should be subjected to this inconvenience, but you will forgive me if I feel that Miss Carruthers is my first care. She" — he smiled down at Nan, the way I'd like to smile at a girl some day —"She is engaged to me, you know," he said.

The next morning Nan took me aside after breakfast and asked me if I would like the south attic to use for a gym for us boys. You can imagine what I said.

I shouldn't wonder if she is going to turn out a man's woman, after all.

A Far Cry.*

BY MAGLYN DUPREE.

IT had not been easy for John Wellington, Sr., to select his Christmas gifts this year, although his old wife and one or two servants were all for whom he had to provide. It was Christmas Eve, and he had been through bookstores, where handsomely bound volumes of story writers, philosophers and poets were displayed on every counter; through brilliantly lighted jewelry stores, where precious stones gleamed softly against backgrounds of rich velvet; through the perfumed shop of the florist, where delicate blossoms from famous greenhouses breathed forth a fragrance that gave the lie to the bitter wind and swirling snow outside. With each he had left a generous check, but always with an unsatisfied feeling that he was paying for something he did not care to have. Finally, he had been lured into a shop whose windows displayed an attractive lot of toys for small boys, and he had selected from its almost endless store of guns, wagons, wonderful animals and ear-splitting "wind instruments," a red tin horn, costing him only twenty five cents.

This had given him more satisfaction than any purchase he had made for many times that amount.

The other parcels he had ordered delivered, but this he had carried himself, as though it were something too precious to be trusted to other hands. It was this that he unwrapped before the big, old-fashioned fireplace where his wife sat, as soon as he had come in from the storm swept street. As he held it up where the red gleam of the firelight was caught on its rounded surface, a look of surprise swept over the gentle old face near him.

"Why, John, you never bought that! Surely they handed you someone else's purchase."

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"No," he said, his face growing suddenly tender, "I bought it."

His wife, with a woman's quick instinct, divined the reason. She stepped nearer to him and laying her hand on his arm, looked at him with pleading eyes, saying, "But why, father?"

It was the first time she had called him father for a decade past, and there was a pitiful break in the old man's voice as he replied, "I bought it for a memory, mother."

That was the first time in ten years he had called her mother, and at the sound of the name, she too, gave way — gave way, womanlike, leaning her head on his arm, and sobbing out a grief that had silently stolen the roses from her cheeks and the light from her eyes as the years had gone by. The old man's arm went round her lover-fashion, while his hand gently stroked her soft white hair. "There, there, mother dear. The boy's not dead. I'll find him yet for you, if I have to hunt the world over. I was to blame," he said, with such infinite regret in his voice that the old wife reached up and drew his head down to her face and whispered, "Don't take it so, father. I know you thought you were doing the best for the boy when you sent him away to do or die on his own account, and somehow I feel tonight, as I have never felt before, that he may be found."

As she spoke, something in her tones made him feel that at last his wife had forgiven him entirely for the decision which, ten years before, had robbed her of her only child. Always before this he felt through all her gentle and kindly care for him, that tucked away somewhere in the silent recesses of her being there was just a little bitterness against him for the childless state he had brought upon her. But now that he, himself, had come to repent it, he knew beyond a doubt that the last drop of that bitterness had been swallowed up in a grief grown sweet from being shared.

He sat down in his great arm chair and looked up with misty eyes at his wife. "You're right, mother. I did think it best. I would rather have seen him dead than worthless, and I knew if he had worth, he would conquer himself, and rise without my aid, more of a man than with it." She put her arm around his neck and patted his cheek. "He has risen somewhere, father. I know

it. He could not be your son and fail," she said, the loyalty and love of a lifetime lighting her face with a soft radiance.

He took up the tin horn from the table where he had laid it, and fondled it as if it were fraught with memories, instead of merely recalling them.

"It's ten years since he left," he said, "what a man he must be now — thirty-one tonight. But I was thinking, when I bought this, of the time when he was a little yellow-haired toddler, and almost drove us wild with just such a horn as this at Christmas time."

She took the horn from him, and looking dreamily at it, said, "We'll keep this, father; maybe Jack's boy will some day make these old walls ring with it at Christmas time as he made them ring, himself, so many years ago."

"God grant that he may!" said the old man. "Do you remember, mother, how he used to come chasing down the street after me when I would start off to my work in the morning?"

"Yes, and how you would pick him up and carry him back to me," she said. "And do you remember the time we came near losing him, the day he ran away to hunt you in the city?"

"Who that saw you then could forget it, mother?" and he took her hand in his and drew her down to the chair beside him. They sat hand in hand in the silence, given over to voiceless memories of the past, only the ticking of the old clock keeping an accompaniment to their dreams of other Christmas Eves. They were sitting thus an hour later when a servant opened the door and said respectfully, "There is a telephone call for Mr. Wellington."

"Can't you answer it, Mary?" the old man asked, loath to leave his comfortable chair and his dreams.

"No, sir. It is especially for you. A long distance call, I think."

"Who the deuce wants to talk to me from a distance," he said, as he rose and went to the telephone in the hall.

"Hello, who is this?" he asked, as he picked up the receiver. "Yes, this is John Wellington."

"A party in Chicago wants to talk to you," said the long distance operator.

"All right, put him up. Who in thunder do I know in Chi-

cago," he ejaculated to himself, pressing the receiver closer to his ear.

A peculiar wailing sound was all he heard, and a puzzled expression crept over his face. "Talk a little louder. I can't understand a thing you are saying," and he listened more intently. The wailing grew a little louder, but still it was nothing but an inarticulate wail, and for a moment the old man looked thoroughly disgusted.

"Confound it!" he shouted at last, "You sound exactly like a mewling infant. I don't know what you are saying."

Then a man's laugh was heard, followed by "A merry Christmas, father. You know exactly what he sounds like, but you don't know what he is saying," and there was another laugh, ringing, joyful, as in his boyhood days, and the old man knew he had found his own.

"Jack, Jack, my boy, is that you?" he shouted, staggered by the unexpected joy of his sudden discovery.

"None other, father, but what you first heard was another Jack, the second Jack Wellington, Jr. He has just arrived, and his command of English is somewhat limited, but he was doing his best to introduce himself, and invite you and grandma to Christmas dinner with him, and——"

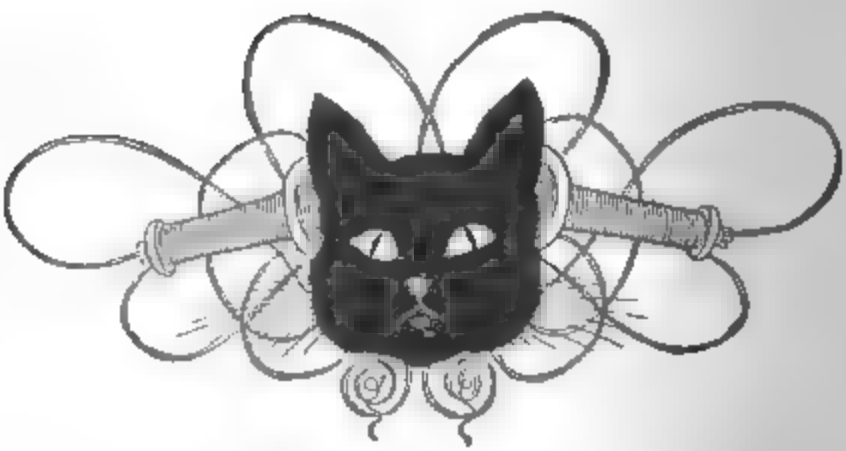
"Oh, Jack, Jack, where have you been all these years?" sobbed the old man.

"Catch the Lake Shore Limited tonight, father, bring mother with you, and I'll tell you all about it when you get here. You've got time. You see, father, I've kept track of you and mother all along. I wasn't going to let anything happen to my old folks, and—" there was a catch in his voice, "I've got the right kind of a report to make, father. Never fear that."

The old man could scarcely contain himself as he listened, pressing the receiver closer and closer to his ear, as though he feared some bit of the precious news might escape him. Then he shouted, "All right, son, we're coming on the next train." He left the receiver dangling on the wall, and started on a run to the room where his wife sat, shouting as he went, "Mother, mother, it's Jack—our boy. Get ready, mother. I'm going to have a cab here in twenty minutes to catch the train for Chicago." She

had risen with a wild look on her face, and had started to question him, but he shook his head, saying, "No, no, I'll explain later. Not got time now. We're going to spend Christmas with Jack and his boy."

He started for the 'phone again, and then dashed back, exclaiming, "Pack the tin horn, if you don't pack another thing. Any child that can cry loud enough to be heard all the way from Chicago ought to have breath enough to blow that horn," and he dashed again to the 'phone to order a cab.



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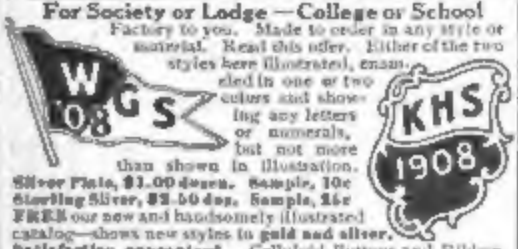

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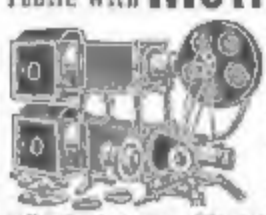

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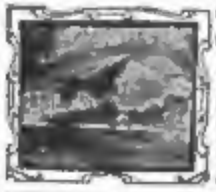

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